

RURAL ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

8th JANUARY 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY FOR WIND ENERGY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update members of the committee on the progress of the Landscape Capacity Study, following the completion of a tendering exercise.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee approve an additional supplementary estimate of £9676 from the corporate priorities reserve to fund the additional costs of the Landscape Capacity Study.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES/BACKGROUND

3.1 The REEA Committee on the 4th September 2013 authorised officers to prepare a Landscape Capacity Study (LSCS). The LSCS would include an assessment of the landscape character areas within the Borough to accommodate different scales of wind energy development; an assessment of potential impacts on any landmark landscape features; an assessment of visual sensitivity of the Borough considering views from important view points and sensitive routes; and, maps showing the landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity of each landscape character area to accommodate different scales of wind development. Such guidance for potential wind energy proposals in areas with capacity will form an important part of the LSCS.

3.2 Officers have since prepared a brief for the preparation of the LSCS. This comprised arranging the tendering documents and their advertising etc, allowing a reasonable period for a reply and responding to enquiries from potential 'bidders'. The tendering exercise resulted in four bids being received.

3.3 The brief included a weighted selection criteria, in which the award for commission will be based:

- Relevant Experience (15%)
- Quality, appreciation and methodology (15%)
- Staffing and resources (10%) Project management and timescale (10%)
- Fixed fee proposed for the work and value for money (50%)

3.4 The Committee on the 4th September 2013 resolved to allocate £14,250 from corporate reserves to complete the study. Officers have now completed the selection process, however this has resulted in the most successful bid being over the current budget. The 'preferred bid', using the selection criteria described above, will cost £23,926.30 rather than the £14,250 originally budgeted, an additional £9,676.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Renewable Wind Energy guidance will set out the factors against which applications for wind turbine development would be judged, and will be used as material consideration when determining such applications.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The cost of the exercise to date is £16,546.00; it was originally proposed in order to complete the LSCS that an additional £14,250 was required. The study will now cost £23,926.30 rather than the £14,250 originally budgeted, an additional £9,676.

5.2 There is currently no provision in the Melton Local Plan budget for the Landscape Capacity Study and, therefore the additional funding would need to be allocated from the Corporate Reserve.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 Once adopted by the Council, the document will be a material consideration in determining planning applications for relevant development. The document would provide detailed evidence to support and inform assessment of proposals. The policy context for such proposals is set principally by the NPPF which contains policies on amenity levels, ‘valued landscapes’ etc. The content would be informative for assessments of proposals within these pre-determined policies.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

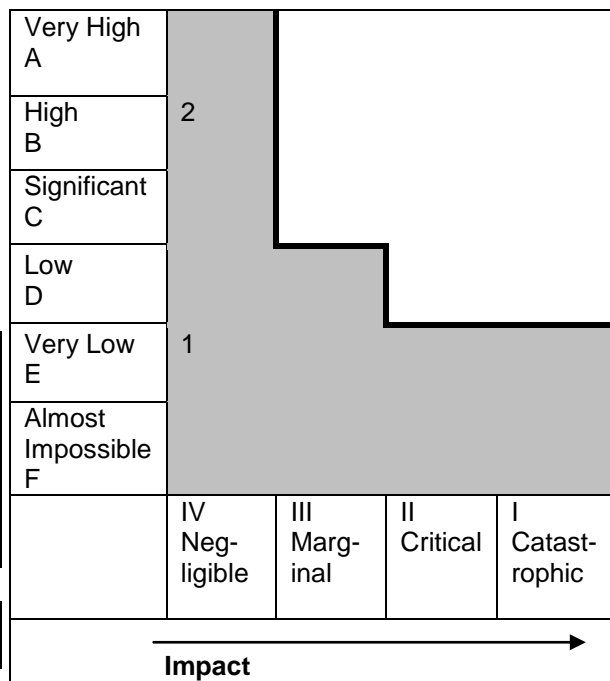
7.1 There are no direct community safety implications as a direct result of this report .

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no direct Equalities implications as a direct result of this report.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 Without the guidance, the Council would be reliant on ad-hoc and more subjective assessment of proposals under the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, on a case by case basis.



Risk No.	Description
1	Guidance does not assist in assessing wind power proposals
2	Guidance falls short of a interested party's aspirations for a full policy statement

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 The 2009 Energy Directive sets a target for the UK to derive 20% of energy from renewable energy sources by 2020. The guidance will be used as material consideration in determining panning applications for the development of wind

turbines, in order to get the correct balance of delivering renewable energy and the impacts on the landscape, nearby residential properties and other issues as identified in this report.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 There are no consultations to consider at this stage. Consultation on the guidance will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All wards are affected

Contact Officer: Ms K Mills, Planning Policy Officer

Date: 19th December 2013